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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 005272

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR POUNDS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: AN ASSESSMENT OF KIFAYA - THE POPULAR
MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

REF: A. CAIRO 3424

[B](#). CAIRO 2516

[C](#). CAIRO 1413

Classified by Charge Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d).

Summary

[1](#). (C) The Kifaya (Enough) protest movement has made a significant impact on Egypt's internal political scene in the first half of 2005. Kifaya is an umbrella movement encompassing groups and individuals spanning a broad range of tendencies and ideologies, united by opposition to the Mubarak regime. Many observers have been surprised and impressed by the group's resilience in organizing a series of small but well publicized demonstrations (lately interrupted) which feature unusually bold and pointed criticism of both the regime and the president himself. The GOE has reacted with dismissive public statements, innuendos about foreign interference, and occasional arrests and beatings, sometimes through proxies. Some observers believe Kifaya's impact has begun to wane, as the group struggles to reconcile the widely differing ideologies of those gathered under its banner. While writing Kifaya's obituary would be premature, its long term viability is uncertain at best. End summary.

A New Actor on the Stage

[2](#). (C) The emergence of the Egyptian Popular Movement for Change, better known by its slogan "Kifaya," has been one of the most significant aspects of Egypt's evolving political climate in the first half of 2005 (reftels). Kifaya is not to be confused with a political party - it lacks both a cohesive political program and even a discernible organizational structure beyond a loosely-knit and apparently erratic leadership. Kifaya is instead an umbrella movement encompassing elements of widely differing ideologies and affiliations. Communists, "revolutionary socialists," Nasserists, liberals, and Islamists have all identified themselves as Kifaya members, united in agreement that "Egypt has had enough" of the Mubarak regime and its vices.

No Wiring Diagrams

[3](#). (C) Though Kifaya lacks a clear hierarchy, several prominent personalities play key leadership/organizational roles. George Ishaq, a retired Catholic teacher, is probably the most-quoted Kifaya member, and his downtown Cairo apartment is often the venue for the group's organizational meetings and media appearances. Abdel Halim Qandil, editor of the Nasserist weekly Al-Araby (who was abducted, beaten, and left naked on a desert highway in an obviously political incident in November 2004) is often described in media reports as a spokesman for the group. Kamal Khalil, a former student activist and director of Egypt's Center for Socialist Studies, is also a conspicuous Kifaya member, often seen leading chants at demonstrations. Other important players often mentioned in discussions of Kifaya are Mohammed Sayyed Said, the Deputy Director of the semi-official Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, who brings to the table a more pragmatic but still intellectual perspective and Hany Anany, a wealthy businessman thought to underwrite many of the group's expenses.

Origins

[4](#). (C) Most trace Kifaya's roots back to the summer of 2004, when 300 intellectuals and other public figures issued a founding statement outlining the group's opposition to what they described as the GOE's corruption, hypocrisy, exploitation, and autocracy. The founding statement also singles out the GOE's failure to confront threats to national security, including "Zionist aggression" against the

Palestinians, the U.S. occupation of Iraq, and "plans to redraw the map of the region," such as the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative. Other Egypt watchers note that Kifaya origins may be traced back even further - to a late 2003 dinner hosted by Abul Ela Madi -- a former MB, founder of the proposed "Wasat" (Center) party, and now Kifaya activist -- at which two dozen activists agreed on the need for a flexible and broadly based protest movement that could bridge the gap between intellectuals and the average "man on the street."

15. (C) It was not until a demonstration in front of Egypt's court of cassation in late 2004 that Kifaya became a noted public entity. The demonstration, though small, was the first time Kifaya's distinctive yellow and red placards, banners, and stickers, with simple slogans such as "Enough hypocrisy," "Enough corruption," and "Enough oppression," were displayed in public. Local and international journalists immediately took note of the group's simple, direct, and bold approach, and of the diversity of those gathered under the Kifaya banner.

----- GOE Reactions -----

16. (C) GOE and NDP figures have tended to dismiss Kifaya as an "elitist" movement and a superficial "photo-op" opposition without a real base of support. In late April, an NDP supporter drew nationwide attention (and not a little bemusement) when he announced the formation of a group called "Mish Kifaya" (not enough) that would advance the argument that Egypt has not yet had its fill of President Mubarak and his excellent governance. In a late May newspaper interview, President Mubarak even accused Kifaya of being a tool of foreigners, claiming to "know" that the group gets its funding from abroad. Mubarak's accusation prompted angry denials by Kifaya, which threatened to sue the president for defamation. (Note: Kifaya leaders, frequently asked about their funding sources, generally respond that the costs of organizing and staging demonstrations are minimal, that all Kifaya members are volunteers, and that many print signs and stickers at their own expense. End note.)

----- A Climactic Moment -----

17. (C) Kifaya has surprised many observers with its resilience and energy in the spring of 2005, with a series of relatively small but well publicized and bold demonstrations that featured sharp, personalized criticism of Mubarak previously considered beyond the pale of "acceptable" dissent in Egypt. Kifaya may have peaked in impact with its demonstrations on referendum day, May 25, urging citizens to boycott what they perceived as a sham political reform. Counter demonstrations, featuring thugs widely believed to have been hired and organized by the ruling NDP who roughed up Kifaya supporters in the glare of the regional and international media, backfired spectacularly. The ensuing backlash included unprecedented local and international criticism of the GOE's actions on referendum day and spurred several new offshoot movements by citizens outraged by the actions of the alleged NDP thugs. With the GOE at least temporarily on its heels, several protest groups staged demonstrations in late May and early June without the usual obstructions from police.

----- Has the Ending Begun ? -----

18. (C) Kifaya lost momentum, however, later in June, when after widely publicizing a popular "organizational conference" that would be open to the public and the media, they failed to secure a venue for the event. Subsequently, Embassy contacts report, a major split emerged within the group over whether and how it should cooperate with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The split was particularly clear along generational lines, with youthful members strongly in favor of cooperation with the MB while the older generation, reportedly including Qandil and Ishaq, adamantly opposed. These Kifaya leaders pointedly and publicly declined the MB's late May invitation to join its own "Coalition for Change and Reform" (septel).

19. (C) There have also been divisions within the group over whether and how to deal with Ayman Nour and his Ghad (tomorrow) Party. A substantial number of the thousands of Ghad supporters who appeared at court to protest the opening of Nour's forgery trial (septels) brandished Kifaya placards and buttons. Nour himself, entering the defendant's cage in the courtroom placed a Kifaya sticker on the wall behind him. Many Kifaya activists, and reportedly key members of the Kifaya leadership, reportedly view Nour as a shallow opportunist and self-promoter rather than a committed fellow

traveler, but the open-ended nature of the movement makes it difficult to exclude almost any regime opponent, including Nour and his following.

110. (C) One Embassy contact who follows closely Cairo's "street politics" recently asserted that "Kifaya" as we know it is over. The widely different ideologies and inclinations of its members were making internal agreement on tactics and strategy increasingly elusive, he asserted. However, Abul Ela Madi (protect) asserted to us on July 10 that Kifaya was stronger than ever. "We are growing. We are hearing from more sympathizers every day." Madi agreed that the group's inability to secure a venue for its "organizational conference" had been a setback, but affirmed that Kifaya would go ahead, despite anticipated GOE opposition, with a planned demonstration in front of Central Cairo's Abdin Palace on July 14.

Comment

111. (C) It would clearly be premature to write Kifaya's obituary. They may yet, as Madi predicted, regroup and continue to serve as a potent symbol of popular opposition to the GOE for the rest of the 2005 election season. Kifaya's long term viability is much more uncertain. Even Egypt's leftists, who make up a substantial part of Kifaya's base, have found it virtually impossible to overcome, among themselves, differences related both to ideology and personality. If the leftists have found it this difficult to agree among themselves, agreement on long term strategy and tactics with Nasserists, communists, right-leaning nationalists, and some Islamists, as well as the leftists currently marching under the Kifaya banner will likely prove a bridge too far. End comment.

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